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the part of the author, than the larger work itself. Indeed, as he himself informs us, it has been "not merely *abridged*, but also *re-written*." We cannot but regard the labor as all well bestowed. The difficulty of so choosing our words and examples as to make them intelligible and interesting to the child, is very great. The success with which Dr. Wayland appears to have overcome it, is in the highest degree gratifying. We have no doubt that its circulation and utility will far more than repay its author for the pains he has taken with it.

In conclusion, we may be allowed to express the hope, that the science whose claims we have been considering, may not long continue to labor under the comparative neglect, of which it has been our present task to complain, and that, whenever we may again approach the subject, it may be to express ourselves less in the language of complaint, than our sense of what was required by truth, has compelled us in this instance to adopt.

ART. III. — *The Alcestis of Euripides, with Notes.*

1. *The Alcestis of Euripides, with Notes, for the use of Colleges in the United States.* By T. D. WOOLSEY, Professor of Greek in Yale College. Cambridge. J. Munroe & Co. 1834. 12mo. pp. 124.
2. *The Antigone of Sophocles, with Notes, for the use of Colleges in the United States.* By T. D. WOOLSEY, Professor of Greek in Yale College. Cambridge. J. Munroe & Co. 1835. 12mo. pp. 124.

A FEW years ago, the Greek classical studies of our schools and colleges were mostly confined to books of extracts. If we were to judge of the progress of taste, by a comparison of the works mentioned at the head of this article with those to which our courses of public instruction have heretofore been limited, we should be far from thinking that the love of ancient letters is on the decline. It may be true that the present age has but few scholars like the Scaligers, Casaubons, and Bentleys of days departed; but such mighty names are not of frequent occurrence in the literary history of any age. And yet the Hermanns, Boeckhs, Thirsches, to say nothing of living

scholars in England and the United States, will stand a fair comparison, in point of wide and deep learning, with the most celebrated names in the annals of scholarship, while in elegance of taste, and the arts of composition, their superiority is immense and unquestionable.

But as a good education now means a great deal more than a knowledge of Greek and Latin, classical learning is not held in such exclusive estimation, as it has been in times gone by. Hence some people are naturally led to think that the study of ancient letters is fast losing the public regard. This study has gone through a change, it is true, but a change, leading to a broad cultivation of the understanding, and furnishing the means of a just, as well as liberal estimate of the value of the classics. The endless field of modern literature is opened to the student of polite letters; and he is taught that taste and genius were not the exclusive possession of the Greeks and Romans. He is allowed to form his judgment by comparing the master-pieces of antiquity, with the kindred works, which have upon them the freshness and glow of modern thought. Thus he may set Homer by the side of Dante, Tasso, Milton, or the Book of Heroes, and the mental exercise involved in doing so is not only delightful by itself, but the comparison will throw a new light on the wonderful genius of the old bard of Greece. Æschylus and Shakspeare may be read together; and the lover of English poetry will be at least entertained by the beautiful analogies, both in thought and expression, between the two greatest masters of tragic passion. Sophocles and Euripides may be finely illustrated by a parallel course from the dramatic poems of Alfieri, Schiller and Goethe, as well as by the curious contrast of the miscalled classical drama of France. The express imitations of the classics, by the poets of modern Europe, also afford the tasteful reader an agreeable subject of comparison. Milton's Sampson Agonistes has the daring sublimity of the Prometheus Bound. Goethe's Iphigenie auf Tauris has the tenderness of Euripides, with the exquisite finish and just sense of harmonious proportion, which belong to Sophocles. The Agamemnon, Antigone, Orestes and Alcestis of Alfieri bring upon the scene the chief personages of the Attic drama, invested anew with dramatic life. This illustrious poet is not perhaps the best example of the modern classic style. The heroes of his poems breathe a fury too much like the violence of his own head-

strong passions, for the sustained dignity and sculpture-like simplicity of Attic tragedy. Orestes, in particular, is always in a storm, and *will* exclaim, over and over again, "Oh, rab-bia," in the very teeth of the usurper, when the fulfilment of his revenge, his own life, and the life of his friend, are suspended on the issue. Ægisthus is a modern villain, though some of his speeches show a spirit of classical propriety worthy the best days of Athens. His soliloquy, on approaching the palace of Agamemnon, is full of terrific sublimity. These and other dramas of Alfieri, on Greek subjects, afford an interesting and instructive commentary, both by their beauties and faults, upon the theatrical literature of Athens. In this way it is easy enough to show, that a wide study of modern literature, which the opinions of the age favor daily more and more, will strengthen rather than weaken a discriminating love of the ancient classics. It will sharpen the judgment, and refine the taste; for both judgment and taste are more the result of many comparisons and of gradual approximation, than is apt to be supposed. The kind of taste for ancient literature thus acquired, a love of antique poetry for poetry's sake, is doubtless more common now, than it has ever been before.

The two poems which Mr. Woolsey has chosen for commentary and publication rank justly among the most delightful works of their respective authors. In point of morality they reach the highest point of heathen purity. In general excellence of style they are unsurpassed, and in some passages unequalled.

The form in which Mr. Woolsey has given these works to the public is neat and convenient; and they are printed with Mr. Folsom's well known accuracy. The text of the *Alcestis* selected by Mr. Woolsey, is that of William Dindorf, contained in the *Poetiæ Scenici Græci*, published at Leipzig and London, in 1830. This text has received the approbation of Hermann, from whose judgment in such matters there lies no appeal. In the course of the drama Mr. Woolsey has introduced a few variations, supported by good authority, but in the main has followed Dindorf. A well written preface contains a clear statement of the subject matter of the play, with a critique on the several characters brought out in the development of the plot. A brief but comprehensive view of the poetical genius of Euripides, in which his beauties are pointed out, and his faults touched upon, with a discriminating

hand, gives additional interest to the volume. The body of notes at the end are remarkable for a union of deep learning, acute judgment and fine taste. Every scholar, familiar with the Attic drama, must have felt the extreme subtlety of the tragic style. Written as these poems were, to undergo the searching criticism of the most fastidious people, on whose severe judgment the poet's triumph or defeat was depending, they were wrought up with consummate art, out of the materials furnished by the most copious and flexible of languages. Besides this, an intense feeling of nationality was to be conciliated. The history of renowned ancestors, the exploits of heroes and demigods, were to be chanted in choral songs, intermingled with moral and religious reflections, naturally suggested by the downfall of mighty families, and the awful retributions of fate, which were the groundwork of most of them. The difficulty of understanding them is still farther heightened by the obscure allusions to remote historical events amidst the highest strains of lyrical poetry uttered in the forms of the venerable Doric. The Attic drama is moreover idiomatic to the last degree. Expressions growing out of the manifold relations of cultivated life, mingled with forms of speech naturally springing to the lips of a people who were lovers of war and rulers of the sea, make it necessary to build up anew in our imaginations the structure of Athenian Society, if we would enter fully into the spirit of the raciest portion of their literature. A commentator, therefore, on the Attic tragedy, ought to be at home in the whole circle of Greek history and fable, beside having a taste trained to feel the delicate blending of shades of meaning, in the finely linked constructions of poetry. The commentaries to these two tragedies show the qualifications we have pointed out, in a high degree. In discussions of the merits of different readings, so far as he enters into them, Mr. Woolsey exhibits a nicely balanced judgment that entitles his opinion to great respect. In unravelling the most curious constructions, his precision and acuteness are admirable. Every Greek scholar feels how much the force and beauty of Greek composition depend on the skilful arrangement of a great variety of particles. In the explanation of these, commentators have had but little success, as any one will see by looking into the common editions of Greek authors. But the exactness with which Mr. Woolsey renders single particles and combinations of particles by good English equivalents is really

surprising. Those who are wont to think the dead languages, as they are called, widely, if not wholly different from the living, will be astonished to see how nearly many of the most peculiar, and, at first view, untranslatable words and turns of phrase are given in the homely but expressive idioms of our own Saxon tongue.

It cannot have failed to strike the tasteful reader that many learned commentators on the classics have been wanting in some of the qualities most necessary to a philosophical criticism. Spending their lives in the study of grammatical niceties, poring fourteen hours a day over manuscript readings, and conjectural emendations, and choral metres and allegorical interpretations, the fountains of sympathy with human feeling have been dried up in their bosoms, the majestic forms of nature have become lifeless to their eyes, and the myriad voices, uttered from every part of God's world, have grown unmeaning to their souls. The friendly collision of mind with mind in the common intercourse of life, the genial glow of thought in conversation, the softening, refining, animating influence of cultivated society, touch no responsive chord in their hardened natures. For they,

“ Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot,
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman.”

They think every hour given to the calls of friendship, or the amenities of life, lost to the world because it is lost to their barren studies. They are stiff, dry, formal, pedantic; and they write over their study doors, such sage apothegms as “*Temporis fures amici.*” How can such people feel the spirit of tragedy, or understand the inspiration of the lyric muse? There have been some learned commentators, to whom these remarks will not apply. Mitscherlich's notes on Horace are touched with the delicate taste of his author. Heyne's commentary on Homer shows a fine appreciation of antique poetry, in the midst of an amazing mass of scholastic erudition. Bloomfield's *Æschylus* has some specimens of eloquent criticism and beautiful illustration. Arnold's *Thucydides* exhibits no small amount of minute learning, with a skilful application of all the resources of modern geography and topography, to the clearing up of obscure passages in the difficult text of the histo

rian. Now, in these two tragedies, there are many passages of surpassing beauty and tenderness, which Mr. Woolsey has not passed by unnoticed, like most commentators, or with a cold, anatomical dissection ; but his remarks on them are animated by a feeling appreciation of their exquisite spirit, and show a profound knowledge of the niceties of Greek construction happily blended with a taste exercised in the higher criticism of sentiment, passion, and character.

The tragedy of *Alcestis* has been considered the most remarkable of all the plays of Euripides, for tenderness. The conception of the principal character is touching and beautiful. Admetus is doomed by the terrible decree of fate to an untimely death. Apollo has gained by some art, a hard-wrung consent to spare his life, on condition of another's dying in his stead. His friends and kindred, even his gray-haired father and mother refuse to save the ill-starred Prince. But his young and lovely wife *Alcestis* resolves to rescue him from his impending fate. This is the leading idea of the play. It is obvious that to carry out this idea in a consistent delineation of character, is no common effort of dramatic genius. It is obvious too that the plot has some difficulties at first sight, which are not easily gotten over. To make us look with complacency on a lovely woman laying down her life for her husband, that husband ought to be a worthy object of such self-forgetting love. But if he asks the sacrifice or even consents to it, he shows a selfish clinging to life wholly at war with that greatness of soul, which can alone bring our feelings into harmony with the action. It must be confessed that Euripides has not kept this revolting view of the plot sufficiently out of sight. The opening scene in the drama gives us the impression that Admetus has gone about among his friends to beg some one to die for him, and that when they all turn a deaf ear, he consents to the death of his wife. Of course, we despise him as a paltry, heartless coward. This impression is strengthened by the indecent language he utters, when his aged father comes to console with him in his bereavement. But if we look a little more closely into the poem, our first impression is somewhat softened down, and the conduct of Admetus towards his father seems less hateful, on the supposition that the poet meant to represent him so overwhelmed by calamity, that he lost all self-command, and forgot, in the bitterness of sorrow, the respect due to the author of his being. The plot, however,

must still be considered faulty in these particulars. Alfieri has treated the same subject, in perhaps the most beautiful of his dramas, the *Alceste Seconda*. In unfolding the action, as he conceived it, the Italian poet has brought the redeeming considerations we have touched upon above, into strong relief. So far, therefore, his play is a decided improvement upon Euripides, though in some other points it falls far short of antique simplicity, both in sentiment and situation.

But setting these intrusive suggestions aside, and taking the character of Alcestis by itself, we must pronounce her one of the most exquisite creations of poetry.

“She was one made up
Of feminine affections, and her life
Was one full stream of love, from fount to sea.”

She is a being with whom all thought of self is merged in an absorbing love of those to whom she is bound by conjugal and maternal ties. Her character is drawn with unsurpassed delicacy, and every word she utters is in the strictest keeping with the spirit of a noble-minded woman. The scenes between herself and Admetus, when she is about to die, are beautifully imagined. Indeed the poet had upon his hands no common task when he undertook to delineate a being so soft, yet so firm, so gentle, yet so heroic. He had to represent, not merely a woman with the delicate lines of her moral and intellectual character, her quick perceptions, her swiftly changing shadowy trains of association, her imaginative affections, and her overwhelming sensibilities, — but a woman, who, besides all these, was moved by the tenderest love of the wife and the mother; from whom a husband is about to be torn by the will of Destiny; whose children are soon to feel the evils of orphanage. Still more, the will of destiny at last relents. Her husband may be spared but she must die. This is the point where all the feelings of the woman, whose life has been blessed in the possession of a beautifully harmonized spirit, a husband's love, and a mother's joy, to whom the earth, the air, the clouds, the stars, had been perpetual ministers of happiness, sweep over her agitated soul with an overwhelming power. Her husband's life is saved; that is the grand aim of her heroic suffering. But she must leave forever the home of her happiness, and her children must lose forever a mother's love and care. She comes abroad to look for the last time on

the light of heaven. She gazes on the long familiar scenes about her, and the solemn vision of approaching death wrings from her trembling spirit some natural words of sorrow which fill her husband's heart with agony. The destiny of her son and daughter, stir anew in her bosom the tender feelings and anxious forebodings of maternal love. In her farewell to Admetus, she speaks in a tone of the utmost propriety at that sad hour, of the claim her sacrifice of life has given her upon their grateful recollection ; and the reply of Admetus breathes the softest spirit of tender melancholy.

It is obvious that it requires a genius touched to the finest issues to support, consistently, the character of a delicate and lovely woman through such heart-subduing scenes, and under such conflicting feelings ; and no one who reads the poem attentively will deny Euripides the praise of having completely overcome the difficulties of the problem.

This character is the more remarkable because the feelings unfolded in it are not often brought out in so strong a light by the Tragic poets. The personages of the Attic drama, it has been well observed, have more of the severe simplicity of sculpture, than of the blended harmonies of painting. The affections springing from domestic life, though several memorable examples show that they were well understood, and deeply felt, are not the ordinary groundwork of ancient tragedy. The terrible power of Destiny, which appears in a tempered form in this piece, and human strength battling against it, are the grand central ideas, around which the circle of tragic emotions mostly revolves. But yet, under every form of civil society and religious faith, the ruling feelings of the human heart, the conjugal, parental, and filial affections, and reverence for the source of all good, will from time to time, burst out in the higher creations of poetry, with a brightness that cheers and warms. In moments of poetical enthusiasm, the kindling soul, even of the heathen bard, seems to rend asunder the veil of ignorance, weakness and doubt, and to have a sudden comprehension of those truths, dimly shadowed out by tradition, but set in broad sunlight by the christian revelation. Hence the elysium of Pagan mythology, — hence the anticipation of a life to come by the hero of the Iliad, when he mourns in agony over his fallen friend, — hence the assured hope uttered by Admetus, of dwelling with his wife, in that world of spirits to which she is hastening.

We venture to offer a translation of the scene already referred to. Our translation has no other merit than closeness to the original. After a dialogue between the chorus and a maid-servant, in which the situation of Alcestis is pathetically described, and the reason given for her appearance, the servant adds,

“ He weeps, his dear wife holding in his arms,
Beseeching her that she will not forsake him,
And asks what may not be ; for she, bereft
Of strength, and wasting with disease,
Is wearing to the grave ; a hapless weight
Upon her husband’s arms ; but yet desires,
Though scarce a feeble breath of life remains,
To look once more upon the light of day.”

This is followed by a further dialogue between the two divisions of the chorus, and then the scene ensues, which the servant has sufficiently accounted for.

Alcestis. Thou sun and light of day,
And heavenly circuits of careering clouds, —

Admetus. Beholding thee and me, o’erwhelm’d with wo,
Guiltless of crime, yet art thou doom’d to die.

Alcestis. Thou native earth, — and thou protecting roof,
Thou wed-bed, in my own Iolcos laid.

Admetus. Rise up, poor sufferer, and forsake me not,
But pray the mighty gods to pity us.

Alcestis. I see the two oar’d boat ; the boatman of the dead
Is beckoning me, his hand already on the oar.

‘ Why lingerest thou ? haste on ; — my task brooks no delay :’
Thus Charon hurrying, bids me to the realms below.

Admetus. Alas ! the voyage that thou speakest of
Is full of wo to me : oh ! wo is me.

Alcestis. He leads me — seest thou ? — to the chamber of
the dead ;

’T is winged Hades, with his darkly flashing eye
Gleaming beneath the shadow of his awful brow.

What wilt thou do ? oh spare me ; wretched is the way I tread.

Admetus. Wretched to all, but most of all to me,
And these thy children who must share my wo.

Alcestis. Oh let me go ; oh lay me down to die ;
My feet are tottering, death is pressing on ;
Dark night already o’er my eyelids creeps.

My children, see, your mother is no more.
Farewell, my children, take my last farewell,
And live rejoicing in the light of day.

Admetus, Alas! these words of sadness that I hear,
Are harder than the pangs of death to bear.
Forsake me not, by all the Gods I pray,
And by thy children, whom thou leavest orphans;
But take new strength, and rise from sickness up.
For shouldst thou die, I can no longer live:
My life and death on thee alone depend,
For I regard thy love with reverence.

Alcestis. *Admetus*, — for thou seest my present state; —
I wish to tell thee, ere I die, my prayer.
I held thee dearer than my life, and now
At life's dear cost, I give thee yet to see
The blessed light, and for thy safety die;
Although I might have lived, and wedded whom
Of the Thessalian lords I will'd, and dwell
Amidst the splendors of the kingly state.
But torn from thee, and with my children orphans,
I would not live, and all the gifts of youth
In which I joy'd, I willingly gave up.
And yet thy father and thy mother left thee,
Although it well beseem'd their hoary age
To die with glory, and to save their son.
For thou alone wast given them, and no more,
If thou shouldst die, could any hope remain
Of other offspring, in their lingering years;
And we together had lived out our days,
Nor thou hadst mourn'd thy wife too soon laid low,
Nor seen thy children orphans; but this doom
The Gods decree, and we must bow thereto.
Well, be it so; but hear my only prayer; —
Not that an equal favor I shall ask,
For nothing is more precious than our life, —
But justice only; as thyself wilt say.
Thy love for these thy children equals mine
If thou dost think aright; sustain them then
To be hereafter masters of my house;
Nor set a step-dame o'er my children's head,
Who feeling not the love I bear, shall lay
On our dear ones, the envious hand of hate.
Oh! I beseech thee, let it never be.
A step-dame set o'er offspring of another
Is nothing gentler than a viper towards them.

A son indeed hath in his father's love
A bulwark to protect his youthful years,
Exchanging with him question and reply.
But thou, my daughter, how wilt thou pass through
Thy virgin years, in honorable state ?
And what will she, thy father's bride, be to thee ?
Oh, may she never fasten on thy name
Some low-born slander, that in bloom of youth,
Shall blight thy fame, and blast thy nuptial hour ;
For thou wilt have no mother at thy bridals,
No mother's soothing in the throes of child-birth,
When naught is kinder than her gentle care ;
For I must die, — not when to-morrow comes,
Nor some more distant, and uncertain day,
But even now am number'd with the dead.
Farewell, then, and be happy ; thou mayest boast
That thou wast wedded to the best of wives,
And ye, of springing from the best of mothers.

Chorus. Be calm ; for I fear not in his behalf
To give my faith that he will do thy will,
Unless he turn from reason's path away.

Admetus. It shall be done, it shall be done, fear not ;
Since in thy lifetime thou hast been my wife,
In death, too, thou alone shalt bear the name,
And no Thessalian bride shall call me husband,
Be she the daughter of a high-born sire,
Or loveliest in the beauty of her form.
I pray the Gods to grant a father's joy
In these my children, since I have no more
The dear delight thy gentle presence gave.
And I shall mourn thee, not one year alone,
But every day my lingering life holds out,
Scorning my father, hating her who bare me,
Who show'd their love in idle words alone.
But thou didst save me, yielding for my life
All that was dearest ; must I not then mourn
My sad bereavement of a wife like thee ?
Yes, — cease the festal throng, the social scene ; —
No more the wreath, and music's dulcet strain,
In these lone halls, where they but lately reign'd.
For I can never touch the lyre again,
Nor stir my spirit to the Lybian flute,
Since thou art gone, and joy is fled with thee.
The Sculptor's cunning hand shall shape thy form,
And I will lay me fondly by its side,
Enfolding still within my eager arms

The marble semblance resting on my couch,
And speak thy name, and press the lifeless form,
And think I hold thee, though I hold thee not.
I know indeed, 't will be a chilling joy,
But it will lift the burthen from my heart.
And in my dreams oft coming thou wilt cheer
My sadden'd spirit, while my senses sleep;
For e'en in shadowy visions of the night
'T is sweet to see the loved one stand before us,
Though swiftly flits the well-known form away.
If Orpheus' voice and wondrous song were mine,
That Ceres' daughter and her mighty lord
Subduing by the magic of my strain,
I might from Hades bring thee to the day,
I would descend, and neither Pluto's dog,
Nor Charon at the oar, the guide of ghosts,
Should hold me, ere I sped thee back to life.
But since I may not, wait my coming there
When I shall die ; — and have a home prepared
That we may dwell together in that world.
For I will bid them lay my breathless corse
In the same cedar, side by side with thee ;
For I will not be sunder'd e'en in death
From thee, who hast alone been faithful to me."

Of the farther development of the plot, and the issue of the drama, but little remains to be said. The burthen of the following dialogue is the mourning for the death of Alcestis, and the celebration of her virtues. The choral songs grow naturally out of the situation of the dramatic characters, and some of them are eminently beautiful; this is particularly true of the song in praise of Admetus, beginning at line 569, and that on the irresistible power of Fate, beginning at line 962. The character and conduct of Hercules, bring to light some curious traits of ancient life. As he is quite a subordinate personage, so far as the main interest of the poem goes, an example of high intellectual dignity will scarcely be required of him. But with all his boisterous and unseasonable merriment, he is actuated by noble and generous feelings. As soon as he learns the fate of Alcestis, he resolves to restore her to her husband's arms; and as he is the son of a god, and as the descent to Pluto's kingdom was no uncommon adventure in those old times, it will not do to be over sceptical about his ability to accomplish his resolution. The final issue of the piece is not unnatural, according to the mythological notions of the Greeks, and, making due allowance for differences of time,

religion, and character, is not unlike, as Mr. Woolsey intimates, the conclusion of Shakspeare's *Winter's Tale*.

The Preface and Commentary to *Antigone*, are even more creditable to Mr. Woolsey's ability, than those to *Alcestis*. The sketch of the poem, in the preface, is written with clearness and brevity. The difficulties in this play, that call for a commentator's explanation, are far more numerous, than in the *Alcestis*. Besides the many subtle forms of expression in the iambic dialogue, the choral songs, rising to a high strain of lyrical boldness, abound in far-sought and fabulous allusions, which heightened their effect on an Athenian audience, familiar from childhood with the whole circle of mythological tales, but which are a terrible stumbling block to the modern reader. Even the fine song of triumph, almost at the opening of the poem, has difficulties of text, of construction, and of allusion, which have given rise to a wide diversity of opinions among the commentators. And in that most intricate passage, beginning at verse 944, there are entangled expressions, of which no satisfactory meaning can be made out. In Mr. Woolsey's commentaries on these, and numberless other knotty passages, he puts them together in a more intelligible form, and shows a sharper perception of delicate shades of meaning, than we have ever met with, in explanations of any other edition whatever.

The style of Sophocles differs in several particulars from that of Euripides. The former had a more creative imagination, and dealt more in an ideal elevation of character, than the latter. It was, therefore, more natural for him than for Euripides, to select a form of language removed from that of daily life; and his choice of words is in accordance with the tone of his mind. He clothes the calm dignity of his thoughts, in elevated expressions, polished to the last degree. In every language, there are turns of phraseology, which have gone out of use for the common purposes of life, but have a solemn effect when brought into devotional exercises, and the higher kinds of poetry. This portion of Greek was probably greater than the corresponding part of other languages, being drawn from the copious springs of Homer's early epics, and Hesiod's venerable poems; and it probably admitted of being used with greater power, because the education of the young men of Athens imbued their minds with a love of ancient poetry, which was fostered afterwards by hearing it chanted at the Panathenaic festivals. Sophocles availed himself of this por-

tion of the Greek language and this taste of his countrymen, with consummate art. He selected the most refined phraseology of his day, but softened it down with the mellow tints of antiquity; he heightened its effect by mingling with it venerable forms of expression, with which an Athenian's pride of ancestry and patriotic recollections were closely allied. In this respect, Sophocles is not unlike Milton, whose stately muse assumes a greater majesty, by investing herself in a certain antique gravity, beyond the usage of the age, in which his poems were composed. But the style of Euripides was hardly above the tone of polished society in his own day. It is elegant and flowing, often negligent and diffuse, sometimes highly expressive, but never reminds the reader of the heroic simplicity of Homer. Setting aside the metre and a few poetical ornaments, it is little above the language which we may easily imagine Athenian gentlemen to have used in the discussions and conversations of their symposia. Hence Sophocles requires more labor to understand him, than Euripides. He is also more elaborate and methodical in the structure of his plot, than Euripides. The dialogues of the latter often run into long sophistical arguments, which have little to do with dramatic propriety. The dialogues of Sophocles are always compact, and to the point. In almost every one of his poems, there is a leading idea to which all the details are subordinate and in proportion; in other words a strict unity of subject, an harmonious development, and a regularly increasing interest.

Sophocles had also a more poetical and powerful conception of destiny, than Euripides. This profoundly mysterious power, appears under different lights, according to the age and individual character of the poet. In Homer, it is irresistible and omnipotent. In Æschylus, it has the same general attributes, but is more dark, gloomy and terrible, holding Jupiter himself in its inextricable meshes. In Sophocles, it is still terrible, but offers the consolations of religion, and the idea of atonement by death, even while it overwhelms with calamity involuntary crime. In general, as conceived by the tragedians, it was the hidden source from which human events took their unalterable direction, against which it was in vain for man to struggle. Sometimes it appears in the form of a curse, pronounced upon some particular family, and extending down to remote generations. In this form, it is the source of the deepest tragedy, and gives rise to those contests of man

with the course of events, which call out his mighty energies and display him in his most godlike attributes, at the very moment when he falls under the power of an overwhelming destiny. It is plain that the conception of fate rests on the same foundation as modern predestination. The problem of reconciling fate and freewill, was the same as that started in later times of harmonizing the foreknowledge of an omniscient Being, with voluntary, and therefore responsible moral action. It is not clear that the ancients conceived of fate as wholly consistent with human freedom. It seems likely that their views, in this respect, were not very well defined. They certainly represent man sometimes in the light of a victim to a destiny which he can neither foresee nor overcome, — and this is a source of unmitigated terror. But yet, as conscious freedom is inborn in the human soul, we cannot easily represent to ourselves a human will wholly fettered by an all-controlling destiny. The *Œdipus Tyrannus* is the most thorough display of the power of fate within the whole circle of ancient tragedy. But if we look at the drama from a point of view from which it may very properly be considered, we shall see a striking parallel of action between the doings of freewill, and the train of events laid by inexorable fate. The doom of the principal personages in it, is twice foretold. Laius is warned that he is to die by the hand of his own son, and so is left free to choose whatever mode he will of escape. *Œdipus* is forewarned that he will slay his father and marry his mother; his horror at the thought of such crimes, leads him to take what he supposes the shortest way of preventing their fulfilment. And yet the father and son, while acting out their own freewill, bring about the very catastrophe, they were both doing their best to escape. Laius exposes *Œdipus* to death; the infant is saved, and grows to manhood, ignorant of his parentage. When the oracle reveals to *Œdipus* the horrible destiny that awaits him, he turns his hasty footsteps from Corinth, meets his father, and the issue of that meeting is his father's death. Journeying on, he comes to Thebes, saves the city from destruction, and marries the widowed queen, his own mother. While he is king, a pestilence sweeps over the Theban people, because the blood of Laius is yet unavenged. The decrees which he proclaims, and the imprecations which he utters against the murderer, fall at last with desolating power upon his own head. Thus we are made to feel the

terrors of an inscrutable destiny, which no human effort can change; but at the same time we see that the tremendous catastrophe is wrought out by a series of actions flowing from the spontaneous agency of free human will.

These preliminary considerations are necessary to a just view of *Antigone*; a play in which several important points of ancient feeling and character are beautifully illustrated. In the *Œdipus at Colonus*, the involuntary parricide has expiated his crimes, if crimes they may be called, by a solemn and mysterious death. But the evil destiny of the house of Labdacus, still clings to his unhappy offspring. The two sons agree to reign alternate years, but discord springs up, and the occupant of the throne refuses to yield to the just claims of his brother. His brother flies to Argos, and marches thence upon Thebes with a warlike host of allies. The invading army is defeated, and the two brothers are slain by each other's hands. At this point in the evil destinies of the house of Labdacus, the action of the *Antigone* commences; but before we proceed to consider it, we venture to quote a striking passage from one of the choral songs, in allusion to the miseries of that ill-fated race.

“ Happy, whose life is free from taste of ill ;
For when a house is whelm'd by heavenly wrath,
Wo never fails, but steals from age to age,
As when the billow urged by Thracian blasts,
And roll'd above the sea-swept erebus,
Heaves up the dark, and tempest-driven sand
From the abysses underneath the sea,
And the lash'd shores re-echo with the sound.
The olden woes of Labdacus I see,
Falling anew on his devoted house ;
Nor his doom'd race, their fatal birth can flee ;
God smites them down, and they shall rise no more.”

The ground-work of the *Antigone*, may be explained in a few words. After the defeat of the Argive host and the mutual slaughter of the brothers, Creon, king of Thebes, honors the body of Eteocles with funeral rites, but forbids, under penalty of death, the burial of Polynices, the leader of the invading army. *Antigone*, their heroic sister, and the betrothed bride of Creon's son, resolves to brave the tyrant's power, by bestowing funeral honors on her fallen brother. She tries to persuade Ismene to join her in this pious duty,

but being unable to overcome her timid sister's fears, sternly braces her spirit to the solitary task. She fulfils her purpose, and is at last discovered. She boldly acknowledges the deed, and offers a noble justification, but is condemned to be buried alive. Hæmon, her betrothed husband, endeavors earnestly, but in vain, to soften his father's cruel temper, and kills himself in despair before the lifeless body of Antigone. Creon now feels the bitter consequences of following his own lawless will, and trampling under foot the laws of heaven. His haughty spirit is stricken to the earth, under the heaviest blows of domestic calamity. This is an important part of the moral.

To feel the whole force of the motives under which Antigone acted, we must bear in mind that the ancients regarded the loss of funeral honors, as the last and heaviest of misfortunes, and to perform the rites of burial with just solemnities, was the most sacred duty the living owed to the dead. The spirit of the unhappy man, whose body lay deprived of sepulture, went down unhonored to the shades, and was doomed to wander restless and moaning, until some pitying hand scattered over the corpse the burial dust, and poured the sanctifying libation. Hence the tyrant chose this punishment as the most forcible expression of his anger, and the most fearful form of vengeance. Hence it became an imperious dictate of natural law with Antigone, to bury her brother. The struggle then lay between the fear of offending against the will of heaven, and the principles of everlasting duty, and the obligation to obey the edicts of human power. The end and moral of the whole matter, is the triumph of virtue over human weakness, and of strong principle over the crushing weight of despotic will.

The character of Antigone is one of the noblest conceptions of antiquity. In the delineation of it, the poet shows an exalted view of the relations of domestic life, and a profound knowledge of the human heart. As a daughter, she appears in a beautiful light, through all the tragic scenes of the *Œdipus*, at Colonus; wandering with her blind and gray-haired father, and bearing without a murmur, the utmost ills of exile and want. With the same elements of a tender, firm, and lofty character, she appears again, in the poem which bears her name, under other strongly agitating influences, but still true to the integrity of her nature. She has a duty to perform, in obedience to the voice of conscience, and she follows it out, with an unflinching purpose, to its terrible consequences. She

blends the softest affections of the woman, with sacred principles and unshaken honor. She is the betrothed bride of Hæmon, loving and beloved ; but while a binding duty is unperformed, she allows no softer sentiment to gain the mastery over her soul. By the strength of inborn virtue, she holds in abeyance the mightiest feelings of the heart, until the struggle is over, and her doom is sealed. But then the tenderness of her nature, which had before shone out in partial glimpses, sweeps over her spirit like a tide of many waters. The vision of lost happiness, — of wedded and maternal love, now never to be enjoyed, — passes before her, and forms a beautiful contrast to her former lofty bearing, in the sweetest strains of her last dying song. The poet allows the sentiment of love to enter into and give a coloring to the character, but with consummate taste, keeps it subordinate to the high moral purpose she is destined to accomplish ; yet when that purpose is accomplished, the strong feelings of the heart resume their sway, and in the last moments of life, temper down the stern sublimity of her character to all the softness of a woman's nature. The exquisite propriety of this change of tone, is one of the happiest strokes of the art of Sophocles.

The following scene is almost literally translated. Antigone is brought before Creon, having been discovered, while performing funeral rites over her brother's body.

*“ Creon. Thee, thee, of earthward bending look, I ask ;
Dost thou confess, or dost deny the deed ?*

Antigone. I do confess it ; I deny it not.

Creon. Thou mayest betake thyself where'er thou wilt,
Free from all peril of this heavy charge.
But thou — tell briefly, nor with many words,
If thou didst know it had been heralded,
That none should bury Polynices's scorse.*

Antigone. I knew, — how not ? — for 't was proclaim'd to all.

Creon. How didst thou dare then to transgress the law ?

*Antigone. It was not Jove that utter'd this decree,
Nor Justice, dwelling with the gods below,
Who did ordain these burial rites for man.
Nor did I think thy will possess'd such power,
That thou, a mortal, couldst o'errule the laws,
Unwritten and immovable, of God.*

* To the guard.

† To Antigone.

For they are not of now or yesterday,
But ever live, and none knows their beginning ;
Nor would I, through the fear of human pride,
For breaking them, be punish'd by the gods.
For I knew well that I must die ; — how not ?
Without thy loud proclaim ; and if before
My time I die, — I think it gain to die ;
For how can one, whose life is circled round
With woes like mine, *not* think it gain to die ?
A doom like this stirs up no grief in me ;
But had I left my mother's child to lie
Unhonor'd and unburied on the plain, —
Aye, *that* were grief ; — I feel no grief for *this*.
And if so doing, I am thought a fool,
He is the fool, who dares to think me so."

The other characters in *Antigone* are drawn with much more care and completeness than those of the *Alcestis*. Ismene is a distinct, individual personage, with some traits of exquisite beauty. She is weak and irresolute at the moment of trial ; but when the action is over, and her sister is going to her doom, she boldly determines to share her fate. Creon, the tyrant, is vigorously drawn and represents in a strong light, the effects of despotic power, and self-willed temper on the character of man.

We conclude this notice, by again expressing our satisfaction at the appearance of these works. They are not only honorable to the taste and talent of Mr. Woolsey, but will bring reputation to the classical scholarship of our country. Among all the books of this kind, prepared either at home or in England, for students and private readers, we are not acquainted with any, which are equal to these in variety of merit. Trollope's *Pentalogia*, does not bear the slightest comparison with them, in copiousness, elegance, or value of the commentary. The series of *Tragedies* for schools and colleges, published by Valpy, and edited by Major and Brasse, are useful books on the whole ; but the notes are mostly dry verbal discussions, often showing a *curiosa felicitas* in misunderstanding the poetical spirit of the passages attempted to be illustrated. We are glad to learn that Professor Woolsey is at work on two more tragedies, the *Prometheus Bound* and the *Electra*. When these shall have been published, the lovers of classical literature will be provided with a series of the master-pieces of the

Attic drama, illustrated by the blended lights of grammatical, philological and historical learning, under the guidance of a discriminating judgment, and a ready sympathy with all that is beautiful in poetical inspiration, and sublime in moral sentiment.

ART. IV. *The History of Rome.*

1. *The History of Rome.* By G. B. NIEBUHR. Translated by JULIUS CHARLES HARE, M. A. and CONNOP THIRLWALL, M. A. Fellows of Trinity College. Cambridge, 2 vols. 8vo. First American from the London edition. Philadelphia, 1835.

WE are very glad to find that the English translation of this celebrated work is republished in our country. Among the multitude of European books, continually issuing from the American press, some of little value, and others at the best entirely worthless, it is truly refreshing to see such a work as Niebuhr's History of Rome. We believe it to be the opinion of all those who are acquainted with the work, that it sheds great light on this most important part of ancient history, and exhibits a far more complete and satisfactory view of the government and political institutions of Rome than can any where else be found.

The first edition of Niebuhr's History was published at Berlin in 1811 and 1812 in two volumes. The novel views presented of the Roman constitution and early history produced much excitement among the literati of Germany, and though it was severely criticised by some of the German scholars, its reception was on the whole very favorable. The author was encouraged to proceed in his researches, convinced, as he says, that the revival of Roman history was in accord with the spirit of the age.

In England and America these inquiries, which were the subject of much interesting discussion on the continent, were for some years scarcely heard of. In an article of this journal about thirteen years ago, containing a notice of the first edition of Niebuhr's History it was mentioned as the misfortune, not to say the disgrace of both countries, that a work